

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02 CIEP-01

LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05 SS-15 STR-01 CEA-01 PA-01

PRS-01 USIA-06 /077 W

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R 142230Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7080

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 1495

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR CO

SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. BOGOTANOS, DURING THE PAST WEEK, SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST IN PUBLIC EVENTS. THE FEB 10 STATEMENT BY FONMIN LIEVANO OF A FORTHCOMING DECISION ON THE CUBAN QUESTION EVOKED LITTLE ATTENTION IN THE PRESS OR AMONG THE PUBLIC AT LARGE. THE CRITICISM OF THE LOPEZ REGIME BY FORMER PRESIDENT PASTRANA WAS DULY NOTED BY THE PRESS AND PUBLIC BUT FAILED TO SPARK ANY MAJOR EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE CRITICS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION. THE EFFORTS OF THE ANAPISTAS TO CAPTURE PUBLIC ATTENTION THROUGH A DRAMATIC INTRA-PARTY CONFRONTATION WAS WIDELY DISMISSED AS A HOAX. THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONGRESS, CALLED BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ FOR FEBRUARY, IS NOW TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR MARCH ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOW SOME DOUBT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT A SPECIAL SESSION WILL TAKE PLACE AT ALL.

2. DESPITE THE MANIFEST LACK OF PUBLIC INTEREST, THE STRAINS ON THE COLOMBIAN SOCIETY REMAINED STRONG. INFLATION CONTINUED TO ADVANCE AND INSURGENT GROUPS DEMONSTRATED THAT, THOUGH REDUCED IN NUMBERS AND EFFECTIVENESS, THEY ARE STILL A THREAT TO PUBLIC

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ORDER. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, WHO HAD PROMISED A DYNAMIC ADMINISTRATION,

PARTICULARLY AT THE OUTSET, HAS NOT TO DATE FULFILLED THE HIGH HOPES FOR FIRM LEADERSHIP AND RAPID CHANGE THAT HE ENGENDERED AS A CANDIDATE. THE PRESIDENT MAY YET REDEEM HIS PLEDGES; HIS PARTY REMAINS PREDOMINANT AND THE PUBLIC RETAINS SUBSTANTIAL GOODWILL FOR THE LANDSLIDE WINNER OF THE PRESIDENCY. TEN MONTHS AND MANY PROMISES HAVE PASSED SINCE THE ELECTION HOWEVER; IF PRESIDENT LOPEZ IS TO USHER IN THE ERA THAT HE PROMISED, HE WILL NEED TO START SOON.

3. CUBAN RELATIONS EXPECTED. FONMIN LIEVANO, DURING A LENGTHY FEB 9 INTERVIEW, STATED THAT HE WOULD IN THE NEAR FUTURE ANNOUNCE A DECISION ON THE CUBAN QUESTION "WHICH WILL VERY MUCH PLEASE THE PROGRESSIVE PEOPLE OF COLOMBIA". SINCE THAT TIME THERE HAVE BEEN NO GOC ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THE CUBAN ISSUE. RELIABLE SOURCES, HOWEVER, HAVE INDICATED TO EMBASSY OFFICIALS THAT SOME FORM OF COLOMBIAN-CUBAN RELATIONS WILL BE ESTABLISHED DURING THE COMING WEEK. IF POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE IS THE CONTINUED ABSENCE FROM THE FONOFF OF UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS GUSTAVO GARCIA MORENO. GARCIA MORENO IS THE MINISTRY OFFICIAL WHO ACCOMPANIED REPRESENTATIVE FABIO LOZANO SIMONELLI TO HAVANA LAST JULY FOR THE SURPRISE SIGNING OF AN AIR PIRACY ACCORD.

4. FORMER PRESIDENT PASTRANA DISCUSSES ECONOMIC SITUATION. FORMER PRESIDENT PASTRANA HAS SHOWN NO RETICENCE FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM THREE MONTHS ABROAD TO VOICE HIS VIEWS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE COLOMBIAN ECONOMY AND THE POLICIES OF HIS SUCCESSOR. THE PRESS EMPHASIZED HIS COMMENT THAT THE DECLARATION OF "ECONOMIC EMERGENCY WAS UNNECESSARY AND ITS RESULTS APPEAR EVEN WORSE". HOWEVER, PASTRANA'S COMMENTS WERE BASICALLY QUITE MODERATE WITH ONLY LIMITED CRITICISM OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION. HE MAINTAINED THAT RATHER THAN CONTINUING TO DEBATE THE ECONOMIC EMERGENCY, ONE SHOULD ADDRESS THE PRESENT PROBLEMS WHICH FACE THE ECONOMY. HE STRESSED THE NEED TO PROMOTE SAVINGS AND EXPORTS-- AND THUS DEFENDED HIS OWN PROGRAMS FOR INDEXED SAVINGS (UPAC) AND EXPORT TAX CREDITS (CAT). HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE LEVEL OF INFLATION DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS AND SUGGESTED THAT A COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR FIRST AND SECOND SEMESTERS OF 1974 WOULD SHOW THE FORMER (HIS ADMINISTRATION) MORE FAVORABLE. (THIS OBSERVATION IS PROBABLY ACCURATE BUT IGNORES SEASONALITY AND THE LONGER TERM IMPACT OF REFORM MEASURES.)
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AT THE SAME TIME, HE NOTED CONSERVATIVE SUPPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND CALLED FOR A CONCERTED EFFORT INVOLVING ALL SECTORS TO ASSIST THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION IN ITS REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OBJECTIVES.

5. RURAL GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES. BOTH THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC) AND THE PRO-CUBAN ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION (ELN) ENGAGED IN OFFENSIVE ACTIONS DURING THE WEEK.

A BAND OF GUERRILLAS BELONGING TO THE FARC, THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF COLOMBIA GUERRILLA ACTION ARM, RAIDED THE TOWN OF MURRI (POPULATION 4000) IN WESTERN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT, KILLING TWO CIVILIANS WHO RESISTED. THE ELN ATTACKED THE TOWN OF MORALES (POP 8000) IN SOUTHERN BOLIVAR DEPARTMENT, REPORTEDLY ROBBING DOLS 440,000 PESOS FROM THE AGRARIAN BANK, KILLING TWO POLICEMEN AND WOUNDING ANOTHER SIX. INITIAL REPORTS INDICATE THAT BOTH THE FARC UNIT AND THE ELN FORCE NUMBERED APPROX 30 GUERRILLAS.

6. CIVIC STRIKE IN BARRANCABERMEJA. THE THREE-DAY CIVIC STRIKE WHICH BEGAN FEB 10 WITH SCATTERED ACTS OF VIOLENCE (BOGOTA 1320) ENDED FEB 13 WITHOUT ANY FURTHER SERIOUS INCIDENT. AT THE ONSET OF VIOLENCE, COLOMBIAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES ENFORCED TIGHT SECURITY MEASURES, PARTICULARLY TO PROTECT THE ECOPETROL OIL REFINERY. THE GOC HAD ALREADY ANNOUNCED SEVERAL PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS PRIOR TO THE STRIKE, INCLUDING ONE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE POTABLE WATER IN THE CITY. IT IS LIKELY THAT FURTHER CITIZEN ACTION WILL OCCUR, PARTICULARLY IF THE GOC RENEGES ON ITS COMMITMENTS.

7. MINISTER OF LABOR RETURNS TO WORK - RUMORS OF RESIGNATION.

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

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LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05 SS-15 STR-01 CEA-01 PA-01

PRS-01 USIA-06 /077 W

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R 142230Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7083

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 1495

THE MIN OF LABOR, MARIA ELENA DE CROVO RETURNED TO WORK EARLY

IN THE WEEK AFTER A PERIOD OF HOSPITALIZATION, APPARENTLY TO RECOVER FROM AN ATTACK OF PHLEBITIS. ONE OF HER FIRST ACTS WAS TO TRANSFER HER OFFICE, AND THOSE OF THE VICE MIN AND SEC GEN, TO A LOCATION AWAY FROM THE CENTER OF BOGOTA AND TO ORDER THE CUNDIOAMARCA REGIONAL OFFICE TO MOVE INTO THE VACATED OFFICES. THE MINISTER WISHED TO ISOLATE HERSELF FROM CONSTANT HARRASSMENT BY GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS ATTEMPTING TO BYPASS OFFICES IN THE MINISTRY TO GET HER TO RESOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS. PRESUMABLY, THE MINISTER BELIEVED SHE COULD THUS DEVOTE HER TIME TO MORE IMPORTANT ISSUES. SHE WASTED LITTLE TIME. BY THE END OF THE WEEK, MS. DE CROVO WAS NEGOTIATING WITH OWNERS OF TEXTILE AND APPAREL PLANTS AND UNION LEADERS, PRINCIPALLY FROM MEDELLIN, ON THE REQUEST OF MANAGEMENT TO REDUCE THE WORK WEEK FROM 48 HOURS TO 40 BECAUSE OF DETERIORATING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY. THE UNIONS, INCLUDING AFFILIATES OF THE COMMUNIST-LED TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (CSTC) AND AFFILIATES OF THE UNION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (UTC) ARE UNWILLING SO FAR TO ACDEPT A REDUCTION IN THE WORK WEEK. NO RESOLUTION OF THE IMPASSE APPEARED TO BE IN SIGHT. MEANWHILLE, RELIABLE SOURCES INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT MINISTER DE CROVO'S ILLNESS WAS MORE SERIOUS THAN PRESS REPORTS HAD INDICATED AND THAT SHE WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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RESIGNING HER POSITION IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HER MOST LIKELY SUCCESSOR, ACCORDING TO THESE SOURCES, IS SENATOR FRANCISCO YESID TRIANA YESIS WHO IS A NOTED EXPERT ON THE COLOMBIAN LABOR CODE, AND A FORMER PROFESSOR OF LABOR LAW AT JAVERIANA UNIV. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE DISSIDENT LIBERAL PARTY GROUP, THE INDEPENDENT LIBERAL MOVEMENT (MIL). YESID HAD BEEN ONE OF THE ORIGINAL CANDIDATES FOR LABOR MIN IN THE LOPEZ ADMIN. THE LOSS OF MS. DE CROVO WOULD BE A BLOW TO THE LOPEZ ADMIN WHICH EXCEPT FOR THE MINISTER, HAS HAD LITTLE TO SHOW IN THE WAY OF DYNAMISM.

8. LLERAS REVIEWS BOOK ON CIA. EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS'S INFLUENTIAL WEEKLY NUEVA FRONTERA OF FEB 15 DEVOTED ALMOST AN ENTIRE PAGE TO A REVIEW BY LLERAS OF PHILIP AGEE'S INSIDE THE COMPANY.

9. ALTHOUGH THE REVIEW DESCRIBES THE BOOKS AS "UNQUESTIONABLY MONOTONOUS" IT PRESENTS AN INTERESTING SOUNDING SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS AND CALLS THE ATTENTION OF THE POTENTIAL READERS TO PORTIONS OF INTEREST TO LATIN AMERICANS AND ESPECIALLY COLOMBIANS. AGEE'S ALLEGATIONS OF CIA CONNECTIONS WITH ORIT, WHICH IN TURN "HAS HAD CLOSE TIES WITH THE (COLOMBIAN LABOR CONFEDERATIONS) UTC AND CTC" ARE MENTIONED, TOGETHER WITH SUCH "APPARENTLY CONTRADICTORY, MACHIAVELLIAN ACTION" AS CIA SUPPORT OF THE MRL AT A TIME" WHEN THE LATTER HAD NOT YET BROKEN ITS TIES WITH THE COMMUNISTS AND OPENLY SUPPORTED THE CUBAN REVOLUTION". AGEE'S CLAIM THAT HE AND OTHER AGENTS USED DIPLOMATIC COVER IS COMPARED WITH THE US ACCUSATION OF THE USE BY SOVIET AGENTS OF EMBASSY

COVER, AND LLERAS NOTES THAT IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW WHETHER AGEE'S CLAIM THAT HE HAD DIPLOMATIC STATUS HAS EVEN BEEN DENIED.

10. LLERAS QUESTIONS AGEE'S MOTIVES IN PUBLISHING HIS ALLEGED EXPERIENCES BUT CLOSES BY SAYING THAT "WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED FROM OTHER SOURCES LEADS ONE TO BELIEVE THAT WHAT HE SAYS IS TRUE, ALTHOUGH THE REASONS WHICH CAUSED HIM TO REVEAL IT MAY NOT BE PURE".

11. COMMENT: THE REVIEW IMPUGNS AGEE'S MOTIVES BUT TENDS TO CREDIT MOST OF HIS ACCOUNT OF CIA'S OPERATIONS. COMING AS IT DOES FROM A RESPECTED FIGURE SUCH AS LLERAS, THE REVIEW WILL HELP TO BOOST SALES OF THE BOOK IN COLOMBIA AS WELL AS LEND CREDI-
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BILITY TO AGEE'S STORY.

12. ANAPO ESSAYS THEATER. THE NATIONAL POPULAR ALLIANCE (ANAPO), BADLY BATTERED IN LAST YEAR'S ELECTIONS AND NOW BEREFT OF GENERAL ROJAS, ITS FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL REASON FOR BEING, INSTALLED THE FORMER DICTATOR'S DAUGHTER, MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO, AS PARTY CHIEF IN A FEB 7 CEREMONY AT MRS. MORENO'S HOME. THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE CEREMONY WAS THE ENTRANCE OF SEVERAL ARMED AND MASKED MEN INTO THE MORENO LIVING ROOM. THE MEN CLAIMED TO BE MEMBERS OF M-19, THE GROUP THAT TOOK CREDIT FOR THE 1974 THEFT OF BOLIVAR'S SWORD. THE ARMED MEN THEN EXPRESSED CONDO-
LENCE OVER THE GENERAL'S DEATH AND STATED THAT M-19 WOULD CONTINUE ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PRESENT SYSTEM. THE MASKED MEN THEN RETURNED TO THEIR NEARBY CAR. THE ASSEMBLED ANAPISTAS, THEIR ORDEAL ENDED, DULY NOTIFIED THE POLICE AND MEDIA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BOGOTA01495
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750056-0219
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750243/aaaabmlg.tel
Line Count: 259
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 SEP 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <19 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CO, (LIEVANO), (PASTRANA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006